CLAIMS (amended)

1. (amended) A polymer electrolyte fuel cell comprising a stack containing a plurality of unit cells laminated, compressed and retained via a retaining plate, said unit cell comprising a pair of electrodes sandwiching a polymer electrolyte membrane and conductive separator plates having a gas supply channel on at least one surface thereof and sandwiching said electrodes,

wherein said retaining plate forms a gap between said unit cells such that said unit cell or a cell module comprising a plurality of said unit cells between said retaining plates is removed and installed.

2. (amended) The polymer electrolyte fuel cell in accordance with claim 1, wherein said retaining plate is composed of two plates having an undulate cross section and has hollow sections which are separated from one another, and a cooling water flows through said hollow sections between said unit cells or said cell modules comprising a plurality of said unit cells.

3. The polymer electrolyte fuel cell in accordance with claim 1, wherein said conductive separator plate is provided for every two unit cells and has a cooling water flow channel, and said retaining plate is provided for every one cell module comprising a plurality of said unit cells.

4. The polymer electrolyte fuel cell in accordance

with claim 1, comprising a voltage measurement jig and a voltage display device for said unit cell.

5. A method of using a polymer electrolyte fuel cell comprising: a stack containing a plurality of unit cells laminated, compressed and retained via a retaining plate, said unit cell comprising a pair of electrodes sandwiching a polymer electrolyte membrane and conductive separator plates having a gas supply channel on at least one surface thereof and sandwiching said electrodes; a voltage measurement jig; and a voltage display device for said unit cell, wherein said retaining plate forms a gap between said unit cells or between cell modules each comprising a plurality of said unit cells, said method comprising the steps of:

measuring a voltage of said unit cell or said cell module; and

replacing said unit cell or said cell module when said voltage of said unit cell or said cell module is detected to be a predetermined value or less.